

[DAVID L HANSEN](#)[ABOUT DAVID](#)[ARCHIVES](#)[CONTACT](#)[Full Version](#)   [Text Only Version](#)   [View Source](#)

Tip: To quickly find your search term on this page, press **Ctrl+F** or **⌘-F** (Mac) and use the find bar.

---

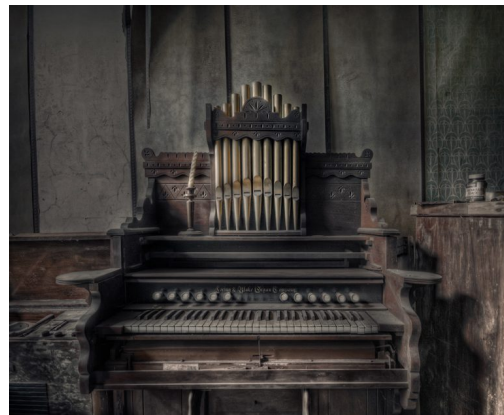
# DAVID L HANSEN

DIGITAL PASTOR // BUILDING COMMUNITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

## Why Traditional Songs (Hymns) are Ruining the Church

We've all seen it. First a congregation starts working some Chris Tomlin arrangements of older music into their worship set. Maybe they even chant part of the worship service. And then, as the congregation continues to grow, someone throws it out there: "*We should start a traditional worship service to reach more people.*"

And it's all downhill from there.



## Hymns Are Uncreatively Repetitive

With my family, we visited one of these “traditionalist” churches during the Easter Season. First we sang “Jesus Christ is Risen Today” (*In Evangelical Lutheran Worship* ELW #365) – about half the song was just the word “Alleluia.” Next we sang “Christ the Lord is Risen Today” (ELW 369, not to be confused with “Christ the Lord is Risen Today” ELW 373, or “Christ is Risen Alleluia” ELW #382). Again, more than half of the song was just the the word “Alleluia.” In fact, throughout the service, nearly every worship song insisted on just repeating the word Alleluia.

It would seem – given the importance of the Easter season – that it would be the perfect time to give some depth and meaning to the celebration of the resurrection. Instead, these traditional songs just give us 100 different ways to say one word.

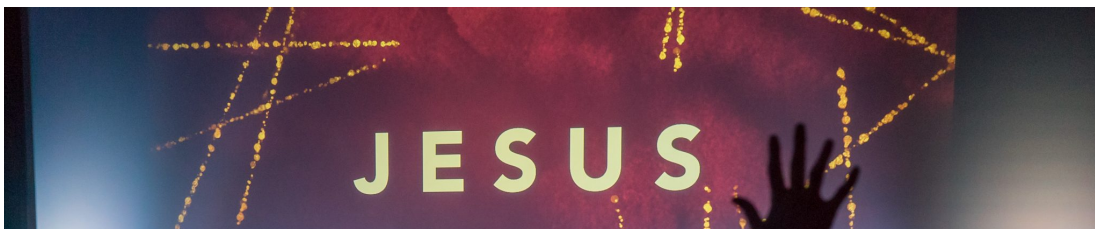
## Hymns Downplay the Importance of Jesus

We all know that worship should be Christocentric – that we are called in our worship to proclaim that Jesus Christ is God made human. And yet, too many of these traditionalist songs ignore Jesus entirely.

Let’s look at some of the top 100 hymns. Amazing Grace? Doesn’t mention Jesus at all. Children of the Heavenly Father? Nope. Shall We Gather at the River? Not even once. Great is Thy Faithfulness? No Jesus there.

Traditionalist songwriters may have found Jesus, but he sure doesn’t show up in their writing. How are our children supposed to learn the power of Jesus if they don’t learn how to sing his praises?

Granted, there are traditionalist songs that talk about Jesus, but so many of them don’t.





## Hymns Keep People From Learning Music

Traditionalist will argue that they group singing in church choirs and that's how they learned how to sing. But given that the majority of traditionalist worship churches have a worship of 50 people or less, choirs are becoming less and less common.

With no choir, there is no harmonizing going on – in fact, with no one leading the singing there is overall less and less singing at all happening.

And then there is the trend toward chant as a song. Take for example, “Stay with Me” (ELW 348), a chant that comes from the Taize community. Of course, it doesn't mention Jesus at all (see above), but it is literally just six bars of music – and *those six bars just have six notes of melody!*

How are new people supposed to learn how to sing the faith when we only ask them to sing a total of six notes in worship?

## Hymns Are Overly Emotional

There's no way around it. Traditionalist worship music is all about emotionalism and the experience of the worshiper, not the life changing power of Jesus.

- Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch *like me*
- Just as *I am*
- What a friend *I have* in Jesus

[DAVID L HANSEN](#)[ABOUT DAVID](#)[ARCHIVES](#)[CONTACT](#)

- It is well with *my soul*

*Me, mine, I*

Part of the goal of our faith is to move us past the self-centeredness of human life – to help us to see others and to open our eyes to the work of God in the world. And yet, traditionalist music too often focuses on the individualist experience.

## Not Fair

By now, you are probably saying that this is ridiculous. That I am being unfair to traditional worship and hymns by cherry picking examples and over-exaggerating minor issues.

You're right. I am.

Yet this is exactly what happens when people talk about more contemporary forms of music and worship.

There is good traditional worship, and there is some that is not as good.

There is good contemporary worship, and there is some that is not as good.

Both hymns and modern worship songs have a vast library of music. Different songs for different occasions and purposes. Songs of unequal value and quality.

## So What

- If you enjoy tradition hymns and worship, find the best of it and let it draw you closer to God and deeper into your faith.
- If you enjoy contemporary songs and worship, find the best of it and let it draw you closer to God and deeper into your faith.
- If you enjoy something different entirely, find the best of it and let it draw you closer to God and deeper into your faith.

And then – and this is key – *don't worry about how others are worshipping.*

DAVID L HANSEN

ABOUT DAVID

ARCHIVES

CONTACT

*It is not our music and worship choices that are ruining the church and eroding our faith. It is our petty criticisms of one another.*

\*\* Edited to add, because it seems necessary: Yes, all these criticisms are intentionally ridiculous satire.

Organ image by Flickr user Andy Bagley, CC-by-2.0

#### JOIN THE CONVERSATION



#### LISTEN TO SERMONS

[DAVID L HANSEN](#)

[ABOUT DAVID](#)

[ARCHIVES](#)

[CONTACT](#)



[Listen to my weekly sermons here](#)

## RECENT POSTS

[7 Signs of Ministry Burnout](#)

---

[Weird Bible Stories](#)

---

[Forgiveness, Responsibility, and Reconciliation](#)

---

[Why Traditional Songs \(Hymns\) are Ruining the Church](#)

---

[Kindness Bingo](#)

## CATEGORIES

[Categories](#)

DAVID L HANSEN

ABOUT DAVID

ARCHIVES

CONTACT



ARCHIVES

[November 2019](#)

[October 2019](#)

[June 2019](#)

[March 2019](#)

[January 2019](#)

[November 2018](#)

[July 2018](#)

[June 2018](#)

[May 2018](#)

[April 2018](#)

[March 2018](#)

[January 2018](#)

[December 2017](#)

FOLLOW DAVID ON



[Subscribe all the latest posts via email!](#)

[Standard Disclaimer Stuff](#)

Did you hear about the guy who invented Lifesavers?

*They say he made a mint.*



TWITTER

[Tweets by rev\\_david](#)

[DAVID L HANSEN](#)

[ABOUT DAVID](#)

[ARCHIVES](#)

[CONTACT](#)

[July 2017](#)

[June 2017](#)

[May 2017](#)

[April 2017](#)

[March 2017](#)

[October 2016](#)

[September 2016](#)

[June 2016](#)

[May 2016](#)

© 2019 David L Hansen

Lovingly made by Worship Times, Websites for Ministries

Powered by WordPress, StudioPress & Worship Times · [Edit Your Website](#)

